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DEPT FOR EUR (DICARLO), D (SMITH), P (BAME), EUR/SCE (HOH,
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SUBJECT: BOSNIA: EUFOR MOVING AHEAD WITH DRAWDOWN PLANS

Classified By: Ambassador Douglas McElhaney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) The European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR Operation Althea) continues planning to approximately halve its forces in Bosnia this spring. A decision to drawdown was taken "in principle" in December, and is expected to be confirmed in Brussels by the PSC on February 27 or 28, once the fall-out from the Kosovo final status process in Bosnia is better known. According to the EUFOR POLAD, while this "definitive decision" has yet to been taken, individual EUFR participant countries have already issued orders to withdraw their forces, making a drawdown something of a fait accompli. The drawdown would leave no significant international military presence in Republika Srpska for the first time in 15 years. EUFOR planners believe that Kosovo fallout in the RS will be political rather than military in nature. While they may be right, the absence of any military presence could well impact the calculations of those who may seek to stir up potential trouble in the RS over Kosovo. End summary.

SUBSTANTIAL DRAWDOWN THROUGHOUT THE SPRING

12. (C) The EU decided "in principle" in December to approximately halve the 6000 strong EUFOR in Bosnia in the coming months. A confirmation of this decision is expected to be made by the EU's Political Steering Committee (PSC) in Brussels on February 27th or 28th. The current drawdown plan calls for the re-deployment of the approximately 2500 remaining EUFOR troops to Camp Butmir, adjacent to the Sarajevo International Airport. EUFOR would close the headquarters of its Multinational Taskforces in Tuzla, Mostar, and Banja Luka. The approximately 45 Liaison Operation Team houses scattered throughout the country would remain open. The EUFOR drawdown and re-deployment would leave no significant international troop presence in the Republika Srpska for the first time in almost 15 years.

THE KOSOVO FACTOR

13. (C) The late February confirmation of the drawdown plan was established so the EU could better gauge the fall-out of

the Kosovo final status process in Bosnia. According to the EUFOR POLAD, all drawdown planning has been predicated on the assumption that the Kosovo decision will have no significant security implications in Bosnia. While conceding that there has been some "turmoil" recently in Bosnia, the POLAD told us that EUFOR planners consider this to be more political rather than military in nature. He pointed to the fact that there was no violent reaction to this summer's bombing of former Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic's tomb and the October rocket attack on a mosque in Mostar as an indication that the security sphere in Bosnia has largely stabilized. The POLAD further informed us that EUFOR military commanders believe that even with a drawdown, EUFOR could deal with any long-term contingencies in Bosnia without the need for substantial augmentation.

"DEFINITIVE PLANNING"

¶4. (C) While a "definitive decision" on the drawdown will not be taken until late February, the POLAD relayed to us that the EUFOR constituent countries' "definitive planning" has more or less made that decision a fait accompli. The POLAD noted that some governments had already issued re-deployment orders to their forces, and that the planning for the execution of the drawdown was complete. As such, forces were prepared to begin the drawdown and re-deployment "immediately" after the February PSC decision.

COMMENT: ASSUMPTIONS, PLANNING SOLID?

¶5. (C) EUFOR POLAD expressed some skepticism to us that EUFOR's Kosovo assumptions would be borne out and concern that perhaps planning had overtaken the decision-making process. His concerns do seem somewhat legitimate-- EUFOR in effect decided to time its drawdown to better reflect the fallout of Kosovo, yet has already completed its planning based on an assumption that there will be no or limited security destabilization in Bosnia. While the assumptions underlying this rather optimistic prognosis may prove accurate, EUFOR's hands in the short-term may be tied to deal with any unforeseen contingency. It is also interesting that EUFOR's assumptions are at odds with what we are hearing from many Europeans when they claim OHR should remain open because, among other things, the uncertainties about Kosovo spillovers are too great to risk a June 2007 closure.
MCELHANEY